

oi
Opera Ireland

MEMBERS' MAGAZINE - WINTER SEASON 2006





Dear Member

Welcome to our Autumn 2006 magazine, which contains details of our up-coming productions and reviews our busy summer programme of Masterclasses with renowned soprano Dame Gwyneth Jones and the Youth Opera project both held at UCH, Limerick.

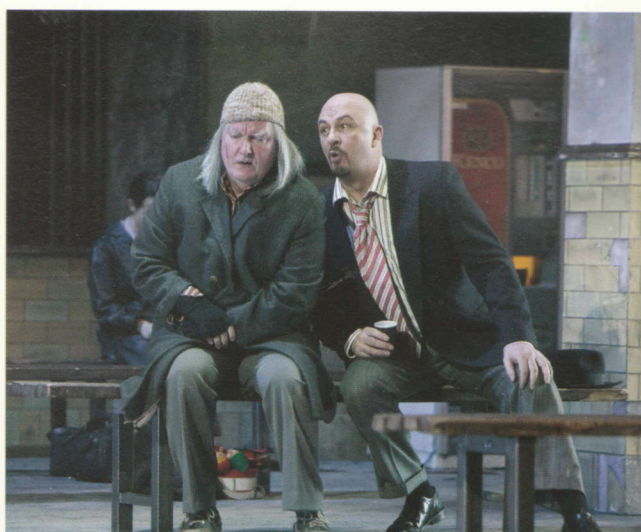
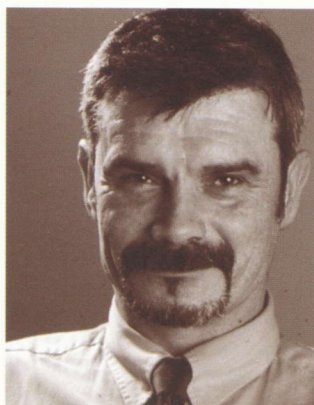
The summer period was also devoted to securing a more constant planning cycle for the Company. Opera by its very nature requires a much longer lead time than other performance art and the establishment of a solid funding base coupled with co-production and touring agreements bode well for the future. In this regard we warmly welcome the recent announcement from the Arts Council, which offers regularly funded clients a greater degree of advance notice of annual funding.

Another welcome development is the refurbishment of the technical facilities and orchestral accommodation at the Gaiety Theatre, which will commence in February 2007. We commend the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism for making the funds available to bring the theatre up to international standards. These improvements will assist in planning co-productions with European opera houses and offer our creative teams enhanced technical facilities. As a result of these renovations, the Spring 2007 programme of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, and Mozart's *Così fan tutte* will take place in the RDS, slightly later than usual in May.

And as I prepare to take my leave after twenty-one years, I would like to offer every future success to the Board, the Executive and the myriad elements, which go to make up Opera Ireland. I believe the next stage of development for the Company will be exciting and dynamic, marked with greater international recognition. Yes, there are always challenges, especially where funding is concerned however the essential infrastructure for the creation of good art is firmly in place. The future looks bright.

I do hope you enjoy our forthcoming programme.

David Collopy
Chief Executive



Dear Friends

Much has been said and written about Opera Ireland's new production of Puccini's *La Bohème*. It comes at the end of an exciting and challenging two years of preparation. Never before has our company been involved in such a long period of preparation for an opera production. The prisoners who designed and built the sets and costumes in Mountjoy and the Maiano prison in Italy will hereafter need and want new projects and new challenges. We are thinking already about continuing this relationship and making sure that the opening night of *Bohème* will not be the end of the experiment.

After his energetic, dynamic and subtle approach to our 2004 production of *Tosca*, Alexander Anissimov is back with us to conduct this very special *La Bohème*. The young and mainly Italian cast is lead by Fiorilla Burato as Mimi.

For the second time in recent years, Opera Ireland presents an opera by a living composer, André Prévin's setting of Tennessee Williams's great drama *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The work has had many successful outings in the USA and mainland Europe, but the Opera Ireland production will be the first one seen in Ireland or Britain. A mostly Irish cast, led by Orla Boylan as Blanche DuBois and Sam McElroy as Stanley Kowalski, will be directed by Lynne Parker and conducted by David Brophy. Sets and costumes will be designed by Monica Frawley.

This season will be the last one overseen by our Chief Executive David Collopy, who is leaving to form his own project management company. Over the last eight years, David and I have developed a very close working relationship, during which we steered Opera Ireland through times that were always challenging, sometimes difficult, but ultimately rewarding. David's experience and determination were crucial elements in attaining the international reputation our company now enjoys.

Thank you, David, for eight wonderful years of mutual respect, trust, understanding and friendship. We wish you best of luck with your future ventures.

Dieter Kaegi
Artistic Director



WINTER 2006

Performances

La Bohème

Giacomo Puccini

Dates:

18, 20, 22, 24 & 26 November 2006

Venue: Gaiety Theatre, Dublin

Performance Times: 7.30pm

A Streetcar Named Desire

André Previn

Dates:

19, 21, 23 & 25 November 2006

Venue: Gaiety Theatre, Dublin

Performance Times: 7.30pm

With the

RTÉ Concert Orchestra
and **Opera Ireland Chorus**

Booking

Opera Ireland Booking Office

Tel: 01 8721122

Ticket Prices: €20 - €84

€1.00 handling fee for
telephone transactions

Open from: 10.30 am to 5.30 pm
Monday - Saturday

Book online:

www.operaireland.com

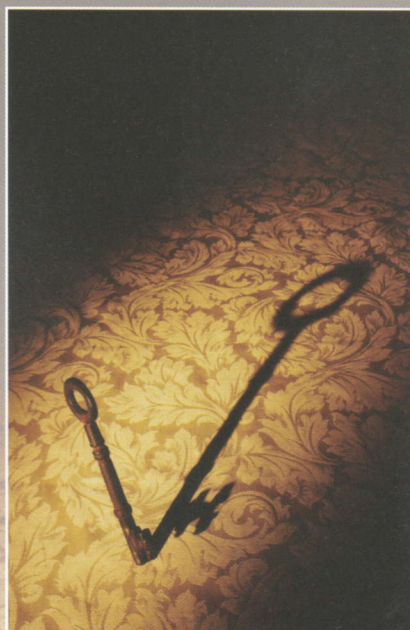
Online booking fee €1.50

Gaiety Theatre Box Office

Tel: 01 6771717

Open from: 10.00 am to 7.00 p.m.
Monday - Saturday

Booking fees will apply for
telephone transactions



La Bohème

Mimi	Fiorella Burato
Rodolfo	Andrea Giovannini
Musetta	Alessia Grimaldi
Marcello	Massimo Cavalletti
Colline	Paolo Pecchioli
Schaunard	Steffen Kubach
Benoit	Gerard O'Connor
Alcindoro	Gerard O'Connor
Parpignol	PJ Hurley

Conductor	Alexander Anissimov
Director	Porzia Addabbo
Set & Costume Design	
A collaboration between the prisoners of Maiano (Italy) and Mountjoy (Dublin).	
Set Design Supervisor	Michele Zualdi
Lighting Designer	Tina MacHugh



A Streetcar Named Desire

Blanche Dubois	Orla Boylan
Stella Kowalski	Colette Delahunt
Eunice Hubbell	Sandra Oman
Stanley Kowalski	Sam McElroy
Mitch	Paul McNamara
Steve Hubbell	Andreas Jaeggi
A Young Collector	PJ Hurley
A Mexican Women	Edel O'Brien
A Nurse	Nickola Hendy

Conductor:	David Brophy
Director:	Lynne Parker
Designer:	Monica Frawley
Lighting Designer:	Tina MacHugh

Sponsored by **LUAS**



Puccini's work focuses on the emotions of four young men who eke out a precarious living from their respective callings as poet, painter, musician and philosopher.

A down-to-earth lyrical masterpiece

The characters in Giacomo Puccini's *La bohème* are far removed from the rich and titled people found in earlier 19th-century Italian operas. Their concerns are those of ordinary down-to-earth folk: the everyday problems, the little joys and not-so-little sorrows of life in the Latin Quarter of Paris in the early 1830s, as depicted in Henri Murger's *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*.

Puccini's work focuses on the emotions of four young men who eke out a precarious living from their respective callings as poet, painter, musician and philosopher. The main romantic issues are those of the poet and the painter and their respective lovers Mimi and Musetta. The musical themes allotted to these characters serve to enhance their dramatic credibility, and throughout the opera their recurring melodies are subtly changed to produce new insights into the characters' personalities. The naturalism of the story, combined with the restraint and tenderness of Puccini's music, makes for a poignant human drama. It is undoubtedly for this reason that *La Bohème* continues to be Puccini's best-loved opera.

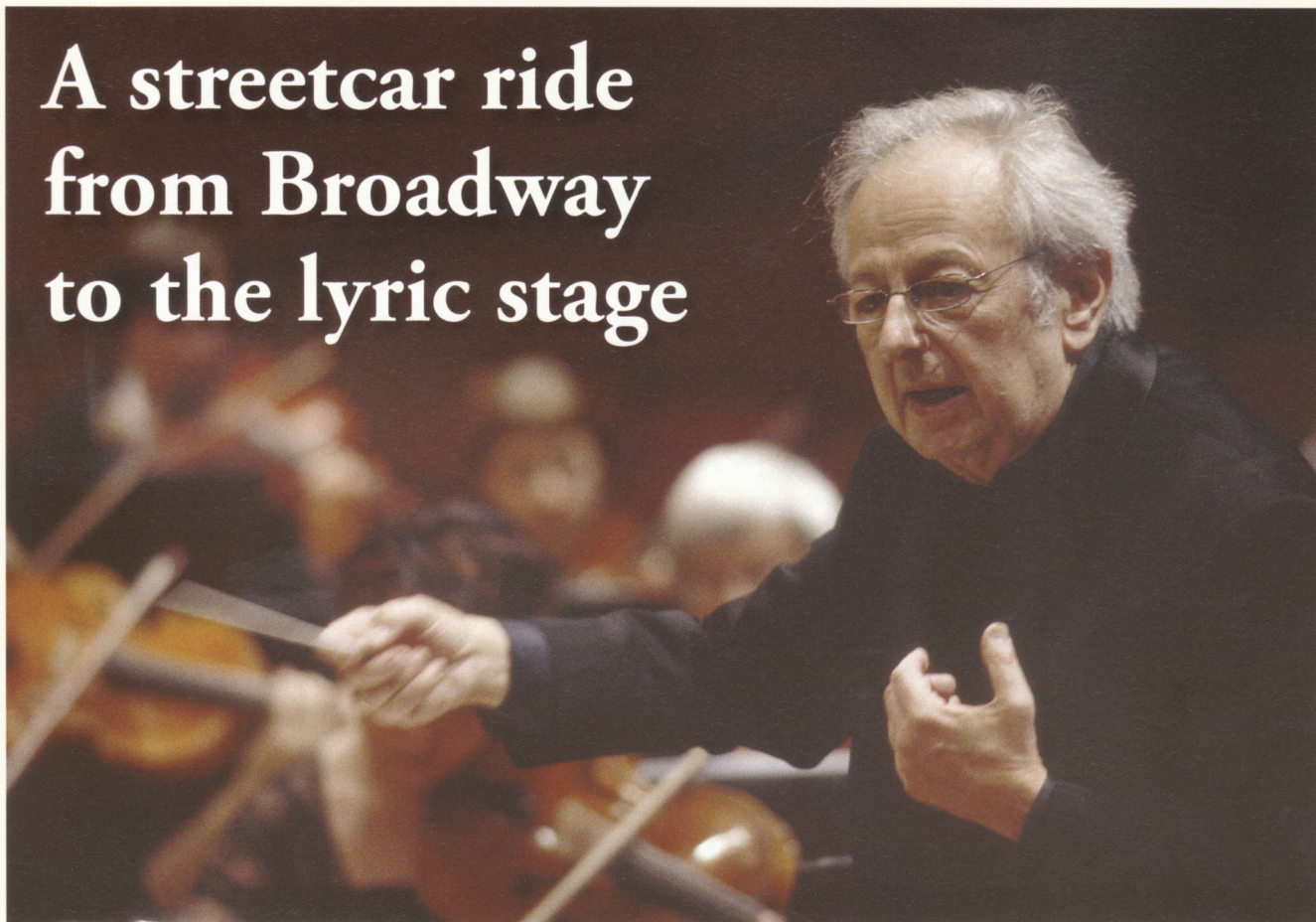
It took a long time to complete the libretto for *La Bohème*. Puccini's stormy relationship with his librettists Illica and

Giacosa didn't help. Indeed, on more than one occasion they were on the point of giving up the task, saying it was impossible to do what the composer wanted. Then there was the wrangling over ownership of the subject with Ruggero Leoncavallo, whose own *La Bohème* would be launched in Venice in May of 1897. In the course of this quarrel, Puccini claimed that he had commenced work on his version of Murger's stories as early as January 1893. Whatever about the truth of that claim, we know for certain that he wrote the last note of the score on 10 November 1895, feeling as though 'his own youth died with the death of Mimi'.

In the light of *La Bohème's* safe position at the top of today's operatic popularity polls, it's hard to understand why the work was not at first all that successful. At its premiere in Turin in February 1896, the audience was apathetic, and the critics, mainly hostile, throwing out adjectives like 'unsuccessful' and generally seeing the work as a 'deplorable decline'. When it was given in Rome, soon afterward, it was still received coldly. To outward appearances it seemed that Puccini had produced a failure. But the composer's belief in his opera remained steadfast, and his faith was rewarded later the same

year when the opera's Palermo debut was a triumph. There was such an ovation that the entire death scene had to be repeated. From this performance on, the opera passed from one triumph to another, first in Italy then throughout the rest of the world. And rightly so, because Puccini's adroit balancing act between realism and the impressionism, happiness and pathos, passionate lyricism and clear characterisation, surely make this lyrical masterpiece one of the most original creations for the operatic stage.

A streetcar ride from Broadway to the lyric stage



Tennessee Williams always claimed that his plays, especially *A Streetcar Named Desire*, were quite operatic enough without having music added. Yet, in the mid-1960s he invited composer Lee Hoiby to adapt any of them he wished for the lyric stage. Hoiby chose to set *Summer and Smoke*, and his operatic version eventually had its premiere at the St Paul Opera in Minnesota in 1971.

Twenty-five years would pass before Lofti Monsouri commissioned André Previn to set *Streetcar* for his San Francisco Opera. After almost-50 years' experience of writing dramatic film and stage music, as well as more recent success as a songwriter, Previn felt that it maybe it was, indeed, time for him to dip his compositional talents into the operatic ocean. The idea of setting Tennessee Williams's immortal prose to music caused him some initial doubts, but the prospect of having Renée Fleming metamorphose Blanche DeBois into an operatic diva was hard to resist.

The task of translating Williams's lengthy script into an opera libretto fell to Philip Littell. Because sung text takes longer to put across than spoken words, Little had to lose more than 60 minutes of the original

while still maintaining the work's narrative potency. Furthermore, he had to avoid alienating theatergoers who knew the play backwards and who always looked forward to enjoying their favourite lines. And that's something he achieved with considerable adroitness: Williams-aficionados have nothing to fear from this libretto.

André Previn is an experienced word-setter, and his recitative-like vocal writing for *Streetcar* faithfully reflects Tennessee Williams's speech rhythms. Of course there are episodes of lyrical expansion, moments when the characters look beyond the reality of their lifestyles to dreams of better things, but the music rarely relegates the play's text to mere vocalising.

His writing for the huge central role of Blanche DuBois is particularly interesting. According to Edward Seckers in *The Gramophone*, "Blanche's vain belief that 'soft people have got to shimmer and glow' is reflected in music almost as sweet as it is extinct. Previn is sparing with this music, but when it comes, it floats, untouched and unsullied by the grubbiness, the brutality, of the real world below. And just as Blanche retreats more and more into her imagined world, so Previn's music for

her grows more fragrant, more voluptuous, transporting her and us to higher and flightier regions."

Alongside the stage-dominating Blanche, her subdued sister Stella is also a soprano role. Stanley Kowalski, the hunky brother-in-law who destroys Blanche, is a beefy baritone whose music doesn't always match the man's violent nature. But Mitch, the mother-dominated man who falls in love with Blanche, is well-written for tenor and is given one particularly touching moment in Act Two when he eloquently articulates his belief in the power of love.



La Bohème

the plot at a glance



Paris, the Latin Quarter. In their garret on Christmas Eve, the poet Rodolfo and the painter Marcello are trying to work in the bitter cold. Their flat-mates, the philosopher Colline and the musician Schaunard arrive. The latter has managed to procure firewood, food, and wine. Evading an attempt by the landlord Benoit to collect the rent, they set out for the Café Momus,

leaving Rodolfo behind to finish an article. His neighbour Mimi, a seamstress, arrives and asks him to light her candle. Her coughing and pallor arouse his concern. He pours out his life story, telling her all about himself and his aspirations. She reciprocates with her own tale: "My name is Lucia, but I'm always called Mimi". Then moonlight suddenly spills into the garret and the girl is revealed in all her frail loveliness. Poet and seamstress express their love for each other.

Mimi and Rodolfo join the others at the bustling café, where Marcello's on-and-off sweetheart Musetta turns up and creates something of a scene for his benefit. She gets rid of her aging admirer Alcindoro and is passionately reunited with Marcello.

Some weeks later, Mimi comes to the inn where Rodolfo and Marcello are staying. She tells the painter that she and Rodolfo have quarreled. When Rodolfo arrives, she overhears him saying that he can no longer live with her. They agree that it is best if they go their separate ways. As they sing their tender farewells, they are interrupted by the rather more acrimonious leavetaking of Marcello and Musetta.

Back in the garret, both men muse on their lost sweethearts. Spirits rise when Colline and Schaunard arrive, but the merry mood is shattered by the sudden entry of Musetta and a dying Mimi. She expresses her undying love for Rodolfo and, after a moving episode of shared reminiscences, she dies peacefully.

They agree that it is best if they go their separate ways. As they sing their tender farewells, they are interrupted by the rather more acrimonious leavetaking of Marcello and Musetta.

A Streetcar

Named Desire

the plot at a glance

The entire action of the opera takes place in the New Orleans apartment of Stanley and Stella Kowalski.

ACT ONE: Ex-teacher Blanche DuBois, a deeply depressed woman who is homeless, jobless and addicted to alcohol, arrives in New Orleans to visit her sister Stella Kowalski.

Infuriated by his sister-in-law's put-on airs, her suggestive behavior, and what he regards as her irresponsible squandering of his wife's birthright, Stanley

Kowalski is determined to expose Blanche's lies about her past. What he doesn't know is that Blanche's past is more tragic and sordid than he imagines.

During a poker game, Blanche meets and sets her sights on Stanley's workmate Harold Mitchell (Mitch), a man very much tied to his mother's apron strings. Stanley gets drunk and strikes Stella because he believes she is siding with Blanche against him. Next morning Stanley overhears Blanche encouraging her sister to leave him.

ACT TWO: Some weeks later, Stanley tells Stella that he is having inquiries made about Blanche's reasons for leaving her hometown of Laurel. When he and his now-pregnant wife go out for the evening, Blanche attempts to seduce a young paper boy. She later goes on a date with Mitch, who unburdens his heart to her. Blanche tells him of her brief marriage to a young homosexual and how she blames herself for his suicide.

ACT THREE: A few weeks later, at Blanche's birthday party, Stanley reveals that he has discovered Blanche's unsavory reputation for seducing young men, and the fact that she had been forced to leave her home town. He hands her a one-way ticket back to Laurel and tells her that Mitch now knows everything.

Later that night, after Stella has been taken to hospital for a premature delivery, an inebriated Mitch arrives and bitterly reproaches Blanche. He denounces her as someone unfit to enter his mother's house. This, and the appearance of a Mexican woman selling flowers for the dead, are the triggers that start to unhinge Blanche's mind. Her mental collapse is completed when Stanley returns and rapes her.

Some days later, Blanche says she is going on holiday with a fictitious old admirer. In fact Stella, unwilling to believe Blanche's accusations against Stanley, is packing her sister's clothes for her visit to the asylum. When the doctor arrives, Blanche takes his arm with a smile, then she sets off to be taken care of, she declares, by "the kindness of strangers".



Orla Boylan:

a diva up for the challenge



The scenario is an unlikely one. It's a sunny Sunday morning at a farmland location in Somerset. More than 10,000 rapt listeners, most of whom have never heard live opera, are standing in acres of mud. They are listening to Orla Boylan, as Wagner's Sieglinde, soaring above a massive orchestra as she pleads with her half-sister Brünnhilde (Kathleen Broderick) to save her and her unborn son from the wrath of their father Wotan. But that's exactly what happened when English National Opera brought Act Three of its production of *The Valkyrie* to the Glastonbury Festival in 2004.

'Soaring' is a word frequently encountered in reviews of Orla Boylan's performances. Others that turn up regularly are 'radiant' and 'passionate'. And these are adjectives that apply very much to the vocal line created by André Previn for Blanche DuBois, the huge and challenging role she will be singing in Opera Ireland's presentation of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

But then, the soprano from Skerries is no stranger to vocal challenges. In the course of her relatively short career she has undertaken a fascinating range of dramatically interesting operatic characters, the most recent of which was Madame Lidoine, the new Prioress in Poulenc's *The Carmelites* at English National Opera. Elsewhere this season she will sing Donna Anna in the New York City Opera's *Don Giovanni* and the soprano solo in Mahler's Second Symphony with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra under Paavo Järvi. Next season she returns to Sieglinde, this time indoors and in the original German, with Opera National du Rhin.

Other recent roles in her repertoire include Janáček's Jenůfa, which she has sung at Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Opera de Lyon; and two Britten roles with Angers Nantes Opera, Female Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* and the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*. She also made her role-debut as Strauss's Arabella for Garsington Opera, at which venue she sang an acclaimed Danae in the first British staging of Strauss's *Die Liebe der Danae* in 1999.

In previous seasons she has sung Mozart's Countess at New York City Opera; the title role in *Kat'a Kabanova* in her debut for Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Marenka in *The Bartered Bride* for Glyndebourne Touring Opera; and Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin* for ENO and the European Union Opera. That EUO production is now available on DVD, and there are CD souvenirs of the Garsington *Danae* and the ENO *Carmelites*.



David Brophy

A Very Irish Streetcar

Opera Ireland's presentation of *A Streetcar Named Desire* will be not only an Irish premiere, but a totally Irish venture – on both sides of the proscenium.

David Brophy, the young Dublin maestro who made his company debut with Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* last year, returns to conduct Previn's complex score. From the world of spoken drama, Opera Ireland welcomes the distinguished director Lynne Parker, co-founder and Artistic Director of Rough Magic Theatre Company, and Monica Frawley, who created the splendid visuals for *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Imeneo*, will design the production.

Alongside Orla Boylan as Blanche DuBois, Sam McElroy will sing the brutish Stanley Kowalski, the role created in Tennessee Williams's drama on both stage and screen by Marlon Brando. The Cork baritone is a regular performer with Opera Ireland, for whom he invariably finds a window in his busy international schedule. His most recent undertaking here was the dapper Dandini in this year's Spring production of *La Cenerentola*. He has also appeared as Don Giovanni in 2003, Yeletsky in *The Queen of Spades* (2002), Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* (2000), Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and a Cappadocian in *Salome* (1999). In 2001, his outstanding performance as Harry Heegan, the football hero cum crippled war victim in the Irish premiere of Mark Anthony Turnage's setting of Seán O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie*, won him international critical acclaim.



Colette Delahunt

Colette Delahunt, who makes her Opera Ireland debut as Blanche's sister Stella Kowalski, studied with Nancy Calthorpe at the College of Music in Dublin, from where she graduated with distinction in 1992, and with Valerie Masterson at Trinity College of Music in London. In the wake of various competition successes, she joined the chorus at Glyndebourne, where she also understudied a number of leading roles before making her solo at the 1996 Festival as the fifteen-year-old girl in Berg's *Lulu*. For Opera North she has appeared as Tebaldo in *Don Carlos* and Esmerelda in *The Bartered Bride*, a role she repeated with the Royal Opera Covent Garden in a production seen on BBC Television. Her Mozart repertoire includes Pamina at Aix en Provence, Servilia in *La clemenza di Tito* with Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Countess Almaviva for Lyric Opera, and Susanna for Opera Theatre Company, Glyndebourne Touring Opera and Opera North.



Paul McNamara

Paul McNamara, who made his Opera Ireland debut as Guido Bardi in Zemlinsky's *Eine florentine Tragödie* last year, returns to sing the role of Mitch, the man who falls in love with Blanche. The Limerick-born tenor is now based in Germany, where his interesting repertoire includes Tichon in Janáček's *Káťa Kabanová*, Christian in Alfano's *Cyrano de Bergerac* and Canio in *Pagliacci*. At Theater Neustrelitz, where he is currently engaged, he has sung the Prince in Dvořák's *Rusalka*, Narraboth in Mariotte's *Salomé*, Lenski in *Eugene Onegin* and Sandor Barinkay in Johann Strauss's *Der Zigeunerbaron*. Outside Germany he has sung the title role in Mozart's *Idomeneo* with Cape Town Opera and the tenor roles in Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen* in the composer's home city of Brno. Paul broadcasts regularly on German and other European radio stations and he has recorded operas by Schreker, Alfano and Strauss for CPO. Future plans include *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Eine Nacht in Venedig* and Strauss's *Salome* in Germany as well as *Tannhäuser* at Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels.

The cast also includes regular Opera Ireland favourite Sandra Oman as Eunice Hubbell and Swiss tenor Andreas Jaeggi, who has previously appeared in *The Silver Tassie*, *Jenůfa* and *Die Zauberflöte*, as her husband Steve. The other Irish singers in the cast are tenor P J Hurley as the young man Blanche attempts to seduce and mezzo-soprano Edel O'Brien as the Mexican flower-seller whose appearance triggers the demented heroine's mental breakdown. Edel sang Marthe Schwerlein in the Spring production of Gounod's *Faust*, and was a critically acclaimed Maurya in Vaughan Williams's *Riders to the Sea* for Anna Livia Fringe Festival at the NCH in July.



The Italians Come to Town

Opera Ireland's production of *La Bohème* will feature a large contingent of Italian singers, including the two sets of lovers.

Fiorella Burato, who will star as the consumptive seamstress Mimi, is no stranger to the role. She has already given her interpretation of Puccini's "little woman" at the Festival of Torre del Lago in the composer's home town as well as in Madrid, Rome, Brescia, Cosenza and Cologne.

Two Verdi heroines also loom large in her repertoire: Violetta in *La Traviata*, which she has sung over 150 times in Madrid (with Alfredo Kraus), Geneva, Trieste, Udine, Piacenza, St. Gallen, Liège, Wiesbaden, Leipzig, Deutsche Oper in Berlin, Antwerp, Tel Aviv and Istanbul; and Luisa Miller, which she has performed in Amsterdam, Zürich, Edinburgh Festival-Covent Garden, Berlin, Essen, and Antwerp.

Her Mozart heroines include Aspasina in *Mitridate* (Geneva and Zürich), Fiordiligi (Milan, Reggio Emilia, Rouen, Tokyo, Santander, Peralada, Wiesbaden, Caen, Nancy, Rome, Baden-Baden and Moscow, Donna Anna in Mannheim and Donna Elvira in Bonn.

The extent of Burato's versatility can be gauged by the list of some other recent and future projects. These include Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra* in Tel Aviv, Adina in *Elisir d'amore* in Palermo, Fiordiligi in Beijing, Violetta in Dijon, Luisa Miller in Essen and Leipzig. Next up comes another Elvira in Bonn, Fiordiligi in Barcelona, and Lucia di Lammermoor and Verdi's Desdemona in Dijon.

Fiorella Burato, who will star as the consumptive seamstress Mimi, is no stranger to the role. She has already given her interpretation of Puccini's "little woman" at the Festival of Torre del Lago in the composer's home town as well as in Madrid, Rome, Brescia, Cosenza and Cologne.

Andrea Giovannini, who will sing opposite Burato as her poet lover Rodolfo, made his operatic debut as Danilo in a Toscanini Foundation production of Lehár's *Merry Widow*. This was followed by Belfiore in Mozart's *La Finta Giardiniera* under Claudio Desderi in Ferrara.

Other important engagements have included *Peer Gynt* at the Maggio Musicale

Fiorentino and Leopold in *White Horse Inn* at the Triesse Operetta Festival. At Teatro Massimo in Palermo he has appeared as Almaviva in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Paolino in Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto*. He sang Mozart's Ferrando at Teatro Piccini, Bari, and at Milan's Teatro Piccolo in a production that toured to Madrid and Bilbao as well as another Danilo at Teatro Verdi in Salerno. In December 2004

he made his debut as Don Ottavio with Maestro Desderi.

Recent and future projects include Idreno in Rossini's *Semiramide* for Teatro dell'Opera in Rome, Alfredo in *La traviata* for Oper Nürnberg and Opéra Dijon as well as Il Conte di Bosco Nero in Wolf-Ferrari's *La vedova scaltra* for Opéra de Nice.



Cell windows at Mountjoy prison.



Exercise yard at Mountjoy prison.

ART, THE BIRTHRIGHT OF EVERYONE

Porzia Addabbo, who will direct Opera Ireland's *'Mountjoy Bohème'*, reflects on the project's origin in an Italian prison.

"A director can allow himself only one film in a lifetime. For me, this was *La Bohème in Maiano Prison*, a place where normal rules of etiquette do not apply. A rendition of coarse poetry that becomes art cannot be categorised; it seeks neither pity nor commiseration. And so a prison changes its role; it becomes a theatre, the cinema becomes the fiction, and the staging becomes the most faithful portrait of the actors in the film.

Making the first project a reality was possible only because of the generosity of the Perugian regional government in its role as co-ordinator and financier. This role was taken on by the Irish Government in bringing the Dublin project into being.

But the screen should not be the only medium that gets the opportunity to show the 'free world' how it really is. I finished the shooting of the film with the evident wishes of the 'actors' that all that had been thought, designed and carried out should find its logical conclusion in a performance of the opera. So that this could become a reality, much work was necessary over the course of a year by a great number of people from many different organisations and institutions. Other actors joined with those who had begun the project. They participated in a spirit of great enthusiasm, and many of the important decisions taken were due to their input. The great success of this undertaking was due to their help, so much so that now all the sets and costumes are ready for their debut.

Working in two realities, so different and yet so similar at the same time, has been an exalting experience. Creative freedom has

overcome all constraints of time and space; our *Bohème* shows that even an 'enclosed' space can generate hopes and expectations, and that poetry, beauty and emotion is the birthright of everyone.

In a break with how things normally go, I as a director did not impose my point of view. Rather, I listened to the wishes of my 'team' of set and costume designers, a team managed by my fellow traveller, the extraordinary Michele Zualdi, keeping the promise he made to one of them of setting it in 1977, "a period still full of ideals, even if a bit muddled".

And it is their *Bohème* that I will stage at the Gaiety in Dublin."

Introduce your next Generation to the world of Opera

Opera Ireland's Opera25 membership programme is specifically designed for the under 25s. At just €25 it is a perfect way to trigger an interest in opera in your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews.



The benefits of Opera25 membership are:

- Priority Booking before public booking opens. Half price seats for the first Sunday performance and 20% discount for Mon - Thurs performances.
- Free Opera Ireland Magazine twice annually
- Free programme for performances attended
- Free poster of performances attended
- Discount on selected Opera CDs
- Membership of group VHI scheme with 10% off normal rates.

Please complete the form below and return to Opera Ireland, West Wing 3, Adelaide Chambers, Peter Street, Dublin 8. For more information, contact Catherine Allen on 01 4786041 or email members@operaireland.ie

Name:

Address:

Date of birth: / /

Tel:

Mobile:

Email:

Membership: €25 per year.

How would you like to pay? (Please tick):

☐ Cheque (enclosed) ☐ Credit Card (Please complete details below) ☐ Laser Card (Please complete details below)

Credit Card / Laser Card Details:

Account holder's name:

Account holder's Address:

Daytime Tel: Evening Tel:

Card No:

Expiry Date:

Signature:



Canadian children to participate in Shannon workshops

The Children's Opera Chorus of Canadian Opera Company will travel to Ireland next year to take part in the annual Summer Music on the Shannon. They will join a large group of Irish children in mounting a fully staged opera production that will be seen in Limerick, Dublin and Toronto.

There will also be an input from Canadian music tutors, who will work alongside their counterparts from Ireland and continental Europe. Overall direction will be in the hands of Canadian Bob Creech, who brings world-class musicians to tutor in the orchestral workshops every year. The Canadian contingent this year included Joel Quarrington of the National Arts Centre Orchestra, David Gaudry of the Vancouver Symphony, Heather Wootton of the Calgary Philharmonic and Bruce Dunn from the Kamloops Symphony Orchestra.

This summer, a company of fifty young people put on a stunning production of Benjamin Britten's children's opera *The Little Sweep*. The staging was by Jenny Wake Walker, a director who studied with





Britten himself and has directed this piece many times before. The participating children responded enthusiastically to all the helpful suggestions and direction ideas offered in her daily sessions.

In all, over two hundred children got to rehearse and perform, either in the opera production or in the orchestra, where they played alongside professional musicians.

The 2007 Summer Music on the Shannon Youth Opera will again take place in July. Alongside choral and individual vocal tutoring sessions, the three-week course will include classes in acting and movement as well as set and costume design and preparation.



If you would like your child or grandchild to be involved in the youth opera in July 2007, please email summermusic@iol.ie or check out www.summermusicontheshannon.com for further details.

DVD library

We have a small but growing library of opera DVDs for our Members to avail of for up to 30 days. Each DVD has been carefully chosen to the highest standard in its field. Please contact Catherine on 01 4786041 or members@operaireland.ie for more information.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED

Warner music presents *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*), recorded in Glyndebourne in 1994. Features the London Philharmonic conducted by Bernard Haitink, this exceptional production includes artists such as Renee Fleming, Gerald Finlay and Alison Hagley.

From the Metropolitan opera, James Levine conducts a now famous production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*), Wagner's 4 opera masterpiece with an outstanding cast including Hildegard Behrens, James Morris and Siegfried Jerusalem.

sponsored by

HANTAREX

www.hantarex.it

Les Troyens presented by Opus Arte. Berlioz's epic masterpiece based on the Aeneid comes from the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. Featuring Susan Graham, it is conducted John Eliot Gardiner and is a truly spectacular production.

Other DVDs available are:

La Cenerentola from the Kleines Festspielhaus in Salzburg, featuring Ann Murray.

Falstaff from the Royal Opera House, featuring Bryn Terfel.

Il Trovatore from the Wiener Staatsoper, conducted by Herbert von Karajan and featuring Plácido Domingo

La Bohème. A film version, which features Luciano Pavarotti and Mirella Freni.

More DVDs coming soon. See our website www.operaireland.com for details.



Opera Ireland Masterclasses 2006 with Dame Gwyneth Jones

Dame Gwyneth Jones made her debut in Zurich in 1962, embarking on a long and extremely successful career which even now, over forty years later, has not yet come to an end. Last July, Opera Ireland invited Dame Gwyneth to give masterclasses to eight young singers which were held in the Georgian House in Limerick. I was lucky enough to be one of them!

We sat waiting upstairs in one of the beautifully decorated rooms of the Georgian House; music books, tape-recorders and water bottles at the ready. She came in wearing an elegant white suit and a broad singer's smile, beginning the week by sharing with us some information on how to travel...tying a belt around your suitcase was just one such tip!

To begin the masterclasses, each of us sang one piece for her so she could hear our

voices and see what it was she would like to work on with us individually. The week that followed was a wonderful experience for me as I learned so much from her, both directly and from watching her work with other people.

She began by working on the voice for as she said "If you don't have the technique, you cannot even begin!" She focused on

methods such as using the consonant to drop your jaw into a particular mouth shape for the vowel with the lips supple against the upper teeth to create a round, beautiful tone. She worked on a vertical rather than a horizontal mouth shape and the use of very precise diction to build a line throughout a phrase which she described as "a beautiful row of pearls, all round and brilliant in tone."

To begin the masterclasses, each of us sang one piece for her so she could hear our voices and see what it was she would like to work on with us individually. The week that followed was a wonderful experience for me as I learned so much from her, both directly and from watching her work with other people.



What I loved about her teaching was her extreme attention to detail. No error escaped her, be it phrasing, language, tempo or interpretation of text. She searched for perfection in every little thing and did not stop with a piece until every nuance of expression was right. She was warm yet extremely frank with us and this directness

added another quality to her teaching. She was honest with us when she told us about the world of a professional singer and the difficulties that go with it, both practical and emotional.

The masterclasses ended with a recital given in St Mary's Cathedral where we each

performed pieces we had worked on with her and Mairead Hurley, the accompanist for all of the classes. It was a positive way to end a fantastic week and an experience I hope I'll keep in my memory for a long time.

Naomi O'Connell

Naomi O'Connell - Mezzo-soprano

Naomi O'Connell is twenty years old and in her 3rd year of a Bmus Performance course in the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama where she studies with singing teacher Mary Brennan and repetiteur Mairead Hurley. Naomi comes from Co. Clare where she began her vocal studies with Archie Simpson, director of the Lismorahaun Singers.

A frequent prizewinner at the Siemens Feis Ceoil for the last four years, she recently won the over-all Gervase Elwes Award and Raymond Kearns Bursary which she used to fund several courses over last summer including an opera workshop in Italy with tenor Ugo Benelli where she played the role of Cherubino in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She also partook in the Opera Ireland Masterclasses with Dame Gwyneth Jones and the Abingdon Summer School for Solo Singers in Oxford.

Upcoming performances include the role of Tessa in 'The Gondoliers' with the Rathmines and Rathgar Musical Society playing in the NCH this November.

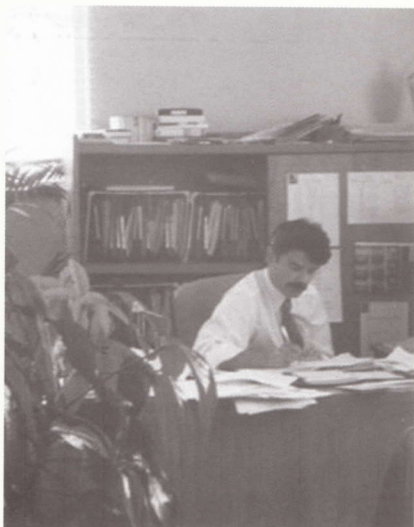




David at Foundation Night 2006 with Grainne Willis, Joan Cleary and Shane Cleary.

The Collopy Years

When David Collopy relinquishes his post as Chief Executive of Opera Ireland at the end of the current season, the company he leaves behind will be a radically different organisation from the one he joined as Administrator 21 years ago. John Allen talked to him recently about the things he remembers most about those years.



David Collopy joined the Dublin Grand Opera Society in late 1985. At that time, the 44-year-old society was still run exclusively by volunteers, and he was its first ever full-time employee. He started work on 18 November, which was also the first day of floor rehearsals for that winter season's three productions, *Carmen*, *The Barber of Seville* and *Eugene Onegin*.

"I had no office", he remembers. "I operated out of my own briefcase for six weeks. Things like fax machines, computers, mobile phones and e-mails were still very much in the future. One of my first tasks was to help Donny Potter and Paddy Brennan shift a piano into the rehearsal room."

It was all very far removed from the situation at his previous job as Administrator of Wexford Festival Opera. There, working in the festival's own theatre, you had technical and artistic structures in place – a completely professional set-up alongside a very strong volunteer force. DGOS, by contrast, was run entirely by

volunteers through a series of committees. The end product, however, was still the same. The public was offered three fully-staged operas with principals, chorus and orchestra. And the DGOS mounted two seasons a year compared to Wexford's one.

Life as a paid official in an amateur company wasn't always easy. "Professionalisation had been foisted on the DGOS by the Arts Council, which had made the employment of a professional administrator, and the subsequent appointment of an artistic director, a condition of the continuation of its annual grant." David remembers it as a sad time: "Men and women whose lives had been dedicated to providing opera in Ireland were being sidelined without ceremony or formal goodbyes. A lot of people were very bitter. But the Arts Council was adamant, it was no longer prepared to give large sums of money to an organisation that was not accountable."

The first five years were certainly the most difficult. "After forty-four years, a well-

defined structure was crumbling; but there was nothing to replace it. Thus, in effect, you had a voluntary opera society trying to run itself like a professional company." This situation continued until the early 1990s, when Frank O'Rourke became Chairman. "Frank O'Rourke was, and still is, an arch-strategist. It was he who finally did away with the committees and radically altered the structure of the company. Now, it was being run by a triumvirate of board of directors, one senior executive and one artistic director."

The first of these artistic directors was Michael McCaffrey. His tenure began with the spring season of 1987, which was the last occasion on which the company toured its productions to the Cork Opera House. McCaffrey's first offerings were *L'elisir d'amore* and Mike Ashman's provocative staging of Puccini's *La Bohème*. By now the number of operas was down to two per season, and this has remained the pattern ever since. The other Artistic Directors during David Collopy's time have been Elaine Padmore, Kenneth Richardson, Dorothea Glatt and the current and longest-serving incumbent Dieter Kaegi. He has also worked with four Chairmen: Donny Potter, Frank O'Rourke, Eileen O'Mara-Walsh and Derek Keogh.

Apart from the restructuring of the company, and the change of name from DGOS to Opera Ireland, I asked David Collopy to mention some of the highs and lows of a career that has taken him from the post of Administrator to that of Chief Executive. "My first 'low' was also a serious financial 'blow'. In 1986 the Arts Council literally halved its grant from the previous year's £85,000 to £42,000. Nevertheless, that spring we put on *Nabucco*, *La traviata* and *Madama Butterfly*."

Most of the other 'lows' along the way inevitably involved finances, or rather the lack of them. The 2002 spring season was reduced to one production (*Carmen*); and in 2003 there were no full stagings, only concert performances of *Don Giovanni*

I operated out of my own briefcase for six weeks. Things like fax machines, computers, mobile phones and e-mails were still very much in the future. One of my first tasks was to help Donny Potter and Paddy Brennan shift a piano into the rehearsal room.



David at Foundation Night 2005
with Ursula Wagner.

and *Norma*. One of the scariest incidents was the potentially disastrous set-back encountered in 2005 when British customs officials impounded the truck bringing the sets for *La traviata*, and it took the intervention of a high-ranking Irish Revenue official to rescue the situation.

Happily, the 'highs' have far outnumbered the 'lows'. There have been many artistic successes along the way, far too numerous to list here. From his early years, David has happy memories of the audience applauding the opening stage picture of that 1986 *Nabucco*, Suzanne Murphy's outstanding *Norma* at the NCH in 1989, and the still mostly-amateur chorus triumphing in *Peter Grimes* at the Gaiety the following year.

He is especially pleased at the number of Irish premieres staged by Opera Ireland during the past decade and the increased participation of Irish singers in principal roles, a situation that harks back to the earliest years of the DGOS. The success of the professional chorus is another source of satisfaction. "I remember my tremendous sense of pride", he told me "at seeing 42 Irish professional choristers on the Gaiety stage in the rousing Act One finale of *Boris Godunov* in 1999."

Administratively, too, there have been many proud moments: the advent of surtitles in 1996; making a speech in Faeroese when Co-Opera, the company's then touring affiliate, brought Michael Hunt's production of *Madama Butterfly* to the Faeroe Islands in 2001; taking Opera Ireland's award-winning *Orfeo ed Euridice* to the 2005 Wiesbaden Festival; premiering Opera Europa's prize-winning production of *La Cenerentola* at the Gaiety this year; and so on. David Collopy is proud of the company's standing within Opera Europa. Opera Ireland was one of the first small companies to join this prestigious organisation, a body within which it is highly respected throughout Europe for its achievements on such paltry resources.

Finally, David is delighted with his swansong project, the Mountjoy *La Bohème* collaboration outlined elsewhere in the magazine. "Dieter Kaegi and I have spent so much time at the prison", he says, "that we have become known as the Mountjoy Two!"



David with Matt Farrelly.

Members' Benefits

Competition Crossword

sponsored by **HANTAREX**
www.hantarex.it



Win €150 worth of Opera DVDs

Complete our opera crossword to be in with a chance to win

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Send to: Opera Ireland, Crossword Competition,
West Wing 3, Adelaide Chambers, Peter Street, Dublin 8

Closing date for entries 17th November 2006

18 - Winter 2006 Season

Across

- 1 The solution is like a Savoy opera (5).
- 4 Grasp, we hear, heads of marine works (9).
- 9 Gloomy act I put on in reasonable surroundings (9).
- 10 Make things easier, with everyone voting agreement (5).
- 11 Senior member getting fancy after party (5).
- 12 Make coy gropes for rotating device (9).
- 13 Defame flier in peace time (7).
- 15 Deduction by medical chief? (7).
- 18 Lay out, breaking tough ship's rope (7).
- 20 One making a start may come to grief (7).
- 21 Singer with cut mouth, perhaps, is deeply boring (9).
- 23 Doctor in sports outfit makes organ stop (5).
- 25 Student follows unit as arranged, up to a certain point (5).
- 26 Raw desire amid creed renewal in masses (9).
- 27 One's not left in the dark in this educational establishment (3,6).
- 28 Completed section of written dedication (5).

Down

- 1 Survive crash in the final resort (4-5).
- 2 Spirited fellow embraces non-drinker (5).
- 3 Arachnid is natural at spinning (9).
- 4 Drop head-first into one wooden tile (7).
- 5 Declared Authorised Version went wrong (7).
- 6 Major confusion, after tea so badly made (5).
- 7 Ridiculed giving drug-or-die alternative (9).
- 8 Graver fashion (5).
- 14 Medical practice shows the way to mix metals around (9).
- 16 Firm desire by abstainer enjoying first vegetable (9).
- 17 Decorated with honours for fish brought ashore (9).
- 19 Newly-coated female, not recognised though real (2,5).
- 20 Loudly behave in a posh way with a beginner, about the truth (7).
- 21 Water-passage may be musical (5).
- 22 Hangover from the past in store licencing laws (5).
- 24 Doctor holds in anger, stuck in the mud (5).

Members' evening

Treat yourself and your guests to a full evening's enjoyment at this season's Members Evening. This time, you can experience this event in Dublin's most exclusive hotel, The Merrion.

Join us on Tuesday 21st November before the performance of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

For **€130** you will enjoy:

A sit-down two-course meal with wine and coffee in the historical Wellesley room.

A talk by a senior member of the Opera Ireland staff.

An excellent parterre seat for the performance normally priced at €63.

This is the ideal occasion to unwind after work or impress your guests with an evening at the opera. The Merrion is a world renowned 5-star hotel situated on Merrion Street, opposite Government buildings, and is less than 10 minutes walk from the Gaiety Theatre. The evening starts at 5.45 PM and the opera begins at 7.30 in the Gaiety.

If you wish to avail of this offer contact Catherine Allen on 01 4786041 or members@operaireland.ie.

If you have already purchased tickets for the Tuesday night performance and wish to come to the Members' evening, just contact the box office and pay the balance for the rest of the package.



Opera Lunch for Partners Sponsored by The Merrion Hotel

Partners of Opera Ireland are invited to Dublin's Merrion Hotel on Wednesday 8th November for our exclusive winter season Partners' lunch.

Enjoy a complimentary 3-course meal in the Cellar Restaurant with members of the opera casts and Artistic Director, Dieter Kaegi. The Merrion is a unique building situated in the heart of Georgian Dublin, and is the capital's premiere hotel. See www.merrionhotel.com for more information.

The lunch is a special compliment from Opera Ireland to our Partners for their contribution to our company. We hope you can join us for what promises to be a delightful afternoon.

Contact Catherine on 01 4786041 or email info@operaireland.ie



Published by:

Opera Ireland, 3rd Floor,
West Wing, Adelaide Chambers,
Peter Street, Dublin 8

Tel: + 353 1 4786041

Fax + 353 1 4786046

Email: info@operaireland.ie

www.operaireland.com

Produced by: Lisa Irvine

Design: Mark Stokes

Music Editor: John Allen

The views expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the board and/or management of Opera Ireland.

Dates for your Calendar

RTÉ lyric fm OPERA ON THE AIR

Saturday night is opera night on RTÉ lyric fm. The evening's main work commences at 8.00 pm and, from November 4, is followed by John Allen's *Après Opera* programme, which continues until 1.00 am.

Oct 7 Das Rheingold (Paris) presented by Michael Lee

Oct 14 Die Walküre (Paris) presented by Michael Lee

Oct 21 Siegfried (Paris) presented by Michael Lee

Oct 28 Götterdämmerung (Paris) presented by Michael Lee

Nov 4 Mozart triple bill (Vienna and Salzburg) presented by Bernard Clarke

Nov 11 Mozart triple bill (Vienna and Salzburg) presented by Bernard Clarke

Nov 18 La Cenerentola (Opera Ireland) presented by John Allen

Nov 25 Faust (Opera Ireland) presented by John Allen

Dec 2 La Bohème (Opera Ireland) presented by John Allen

Dec 9 A Streetcar Named Desire (Opera Ireland) presented by John Allen

Dec 16 Rigoletto (New York Metropolitan)

Dec 23 Don Carlo (Metropolitan)

Dec 30 Die Zauberflöte (Metropolitan)

Jan 6 I puritani (Metropolitan)

Jan 13 The First Emperor (Metropolitan)

Jan 20 Don Grigorio (Wexford) presented by John Allen

Jan 27 Transpositions (Wexford) presented by John Allen



Due to refurbishment of The Gaiety we are moving to The RDS, The Library Hall.

SPRING 2007 SEASON

DON PASQUALE

Gaetano Donizetti

25th, 27th, 29th and 31st May
and 2nd June 2007

COSI FAN TUTTI

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

26th, 28th and 30th May and 1st June
with a matinee on 3rd June 2007.

Ticket Prices from €20

Booking opens March 2007

Book online:

www.operaireland.com

Opera Ireland Box Office:

00 353 1 8721122

(€1.00 handling fee for
telephone transactions)

Gaiety Theatre Box Office:

00 353 1 6771717

(booking fees will apply for
telephone transactions)



THE IRISH TIMES

